

GRADUATION RATES OF FIRST YEAR STUDENTS
IN DIFFERENT ON CAMPUS HOUSING STYLES

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION OF THESIS

Student retention greatly impacts a university, through areas such as finances, services provided to students and resources available to students. An institution depends on student retention, among other key factors, to maintain existing operations. Because retention plays a key role in university operations, examining areas of retention and attrition can help a school maintain high levels of student enrollment. Examining influences on retention, including that of housing styles, on student graduation, may help a university improve retention.

Problem

Higher education administrators value high retention rates, because high retention helps ensure high enrollment numbers and it secures revenue for the institution (Glynn, Sauer, & Miller, 2003). There are many known factors contributing to changes in retention. An example of an influence in retention is that students who do not declare a major leave school at a much higher rate than other students (Dennis, 1998). The American College Testing (ACT) reported “that the non-academic factors of academic-related skills, academic self-confidence, academic goals, institutional commitment, social support, certain contextual influences (institutional selectivity and financial support), and social involvement all had a positive relationship to retention (Lotkowski, Robbins &

Noeth, 2004).” ACT suggests that GPA correlates with the drop-out rate, which changes student retention and attrition. Additional studies have suggested GPA has a very strong influence on drop-out behaviors (DesJardins, Ahlburg, & McCall, 1999; Ishanti & DesJardins, 2002). Studies have suggested that other impacts on student retention include being involved with student organizations, involved on campus, or having a connection to the school (Pascarella, & Terenzini, 1980; Mallette, & Cabrera, 1991). Living on campus has improved students’ ability to persist from year to year and to graduate (Astin, 1977b; Herndon, 1984). The cost of college may also make it difficult for some students to attend (Bozick, 2007).

An unexplored factor to consider when understanding retention rates would be the different areas of on campus housing where students live. Some schools have residency requirements, requiring students who live a certain distance from school to live on campus for a certain number of years or until that student has completed a certain number of credit hours. At some schools, students have the option to select where they want to live on campus, such as a traditional hall setting or on-campus apartments. Exploring whether on campus housing style has an impact on students retention could provide and support the importance of understanding a university’s retention rate.

Purpose of Study

This is a study in the causal comparative tradition, examining the relationship between where first year students live on campus and when students graduate. The purpose of the study is to determine if where a student lives on campus during their first year of college will first, impact when they graduate, and second impact how many semesters it takes the student to graduate. Key factors in this study include the

demographic information, such as race, ethnicity and gender, of the current college student population, the impact of retention on a university and the different styles of on-campus housing provided for students today.

The demographic information of the current college student population allows someone outside of the college to understand the backgrounds of the college population today, such as the ethnic and racial background, the gender, and the abilities of those within the classroom. This information could allow those working within the university setting to understand the challenges a student faces when trying to reach their academic goals. It is important when investigating the development that occurs in college and how exposure to others affects students. It is important to understand the students on campus when conducting a study regarding the graduation rates of students who live on campus.

Significance of the Study

This study is designed to provide information that could help universities better understand the retention rates of students as they relate to type of housing occupied by first-year students. This study may suggest that living in one of three types of on-campus housing as a first year student has a significantly higher mean rate of graduation than other housing arrangements. If so, colleges and universities could use this information to help first year students to live in areas of campus that will be more likely to promote retention through graduation. This study may or may not suggest that living in one of three type of on-campus housing as a first year student will help a student graduate in a set number of semesters.

Different departments and offices could utilize this information to support the success of students and increase retention rates. The housing office could prohibit first

year students from living in areas where they are not as likely to graduate. The results of this study could then be a determining factor in the style of housing that is built in the future. Departments of housing could construct buildings that will promote retention and graduation. Admissions offices and student orientation offices can explain which areas of on-campus housing are conducive to student success when talking with prospective students or students recently admitted to the university.

If there is not a difference in student retention for different areas of on-campus housing for first year students, this institution where the study is being conducted, will learn that where students live during their first year will not impact retention through graduation.

Research Questions

In regards to the purpose of this study, the following are the research questions that are being examined in this thesis.

1. What percent of college students who live in traditional halls, apartments and suite style halls graduate?
2. Among those who complete their degree, how many semesters did it take them to finish on average?

Hypotheses

There is a hypothesis for each question being asked in this thesis that comes from previous research.

1. There is no significant difference in measures between where a student lives on campus during their first year of college and if they will graduate.

2. There is no significant difference in measures among where a student lives on campus during their first year of college and how many semesters it will take students to graduate.

Definition of Terms

There are several key terms used frequently throughout this study. The definitions of these terms varies, so will be defined for the purpose of understanding them in this study. These terms include first year students, retention, attrition, on-campus, traditional style halls, suite style halls, and apartments.

First year college students are the students who have not previously attended post-secondary school. These students are new to the college or university setting. The university in the study requires a minimum 120 credit hours for graduation, and a first year student has not completed 28 credit-hours.

The basic **retention** definition is students who enroll in college and remain enrolled until their degree is complete or until graduation (Hagedorn, 2005). Retention also means completing the degree at the same college or university the degree was started. Students, who transfer to another school, even if they graduate from that school, cannot be counted in the schools retention numbers.

Attrition is considered the opposite of retention. Attrition in the post secondary setting is the loss of students. Students who do not contribute to retention rates contribute to attrition rates instead. While high retention is regarded as important for an institution, low attrition is also regarded as important for an institution.

On-campus housing is the property owned and maintained by the institution as a place for student living. There is usually an office associated with housing that works

with placing students in housing, billing students for housing expenses and maintaining the facilities within the on-campus housing areas.

A widely recognized style of housing is the **traditional style hall**. This is a building that provides residential and sleeping quarters for large numbers of students. Residents of a traditional hall often share a bedroom. The institution of this study describes traditional halls on their housing website as double-occupancy rooms with a community bathroom and lounge.

Suite style halls are living quarters that often have multiple rooms. Several residents may share a common area together, like a lounge area and bathroom. These residents may have their own bedroom, or share a bedroom with another suitemate. The institution in this study describes the suites on the housing website as fully furnished, featuring a kitchen area with sink and disposal. They are available in one to four person configurations with at least one or two bathrooms in each suite.

An **apartment** is a set of rooms grouped together to create one residence. The residence contains a kitchen, bathroom, living area and a number of bedrooms. Apartments vary from houses as they are usually grouped together in a building with other apartments and from suites because they usually contain kitchen appliances. According to the housing website used in this study, the apartments include a kitchen and utility area, kitchen appliances, private bedrooms and a living area. They are available in two or four person configurations with two bathrooms in each apartment.

Assumptions

Several assumptions are being made in this study. This study assumes that different styles of on-campus housing impact students differently. It is assumed that

students are attending school with the intention of graduating or completing a degree. From that, it is assumed that on average, students are expected to be able to graduate in close to four years. Four years is the equivalent of twelve semesters for schools that have a summer semester.

Limitations

There are several key limitations that could impact the results of this study and should be identified before the study is conducted. This study is being conducted at a large, public, land-grant institution in the Midwest. This study is limited to one institution, which may produce different results than a multi-campus study. The exact same study completed at one school may produce different results than at another school. These results could be the result of the culture of the region, the school size, or the school being a public, land-grant institution.

The school in this study is a large institution. The needs of the students at a large school are not the same as students at small schools. The student-to-faculty ratio may be different at a smaller school than a larger school. Faculty to student interaction may be different as a result. Students also have more peers they can meet and interact with at a large institution than a small institution. The size of the institution may be seen as a limitation.

A school in the Midwest may produce results based on the culture of the Midwest region. The school in this study is a land-grant institution. Land-grant institutions were created by the Morrill act of 1862, with the purpose of being the public's institution (Komives & Woodward, 2003). The mission of land-grant schools is to provide knowledge and training for public service, to educate the people, including the

advancement of agriculture, and the mechanical arts (Komives & Woodward, 2003).

Students who attend a land-grant institution may have a different experience than students who attend private schools or liberal art schools, where the mission is different.

Finally, another limitation of this study is that the participants may not have first choice in where they live. At the institution where this study is taking place, students are required to live on campus if they live further than thirty miles from campus. As a result, students sign up for one of three housing styles; traditional halls, suite style halls or apartments. Students who live on campus and return to campus for the following school year get to sign up for their housing before new students sign up for housing. As a result, not all first year students will be able to live where they want to live. Their housing choice may be filled. This is a limitation because housing can impact a student's college experience (Chickering, 1974) and the college experience can impact how likely a student is to persist (Kennedy, 2005). Students in this study may not be likely to persist if they are not happy with their housing experience.

Summary

This is a study examining the relationship between first year students and graduation rates, using a causal comparative methodology. The purpose of the study is to determine if where a student lives on campus as a first year student will impact if they graduate and how many semesters are needed to graduate. A factor to consider when understanding retention rates would be the different areas of housing that students could live. Exploring whether the type of housing styles a student lives in during their first year of college impacts graduate rates could be important for increasing a university's retention rate.

This study should determine if a student's ability to graduate and how many semesters they need to graduate are affected by where they lived on campus as a first year student. It will hopefully determine if living in a traditional style hall has a different impact on student retention than living in a suite style hall on campus or living in an apartment on campus as a college first year student. The null hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in measures between where a student lives on campus during their first year of college and if they will graduate, and second, there is no significant difference in measures among where a student lives on campus during their first year of college and how many semesters it will take students to graduate.

This study is important because it can provide information that could possibly help a university increase the number of students enrolling who graduate. The analysis of this study could suggest that a student who lives in a certain style of on-campus housing as a first year student will have a higher probability of graduating than a student who lives in another area of campus as a first year students. Different departments and offices can utilize this information to help students choose a place to live on campus that could help them graduate.

There are several known limitations to this study. The study is being conducted on one campus; a large, public school in the Midwest. The results of the study being conducted at one campus may produce different findings than if it were to be presented on multiple campuses. Also, the variables of the institution, like the size and the region may place a factor in the results. The styles of housing available to first year students may impact their attitude regarding where they live and their overall experience. Also,

the cost of each of the different housing areas is different and financials do impact retention.

Several key terms have been defined to create an understanding for this study. First year students and on-campus housing was defined, including the three different types of on-campus housing styles that are provided to students on some campuses. Retention and attrition have been defined.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This is a review of literature regarding the topics relevant to this study, including literature on the current college student population, where they live on campus and their retention to the university. The chapter outlines existing information in the field that is relevant to the research of this study. The literature examines students' attributes, precollege experiences and the family background of the millennial generation college students. Literature is provided involving on-campus housing and the impact of housing on a student's college experience. University retention and attrition will be examined; particularly the factors that could contribute to both, and how those factors affect higher learning institutions.

The purpose of providing this literature is to create an overview of information that directly relates to this study. The study will examine if where a first year student lives on campus will impact their ability to graduate. A brief overview of college students, university housing and impact on retention will be practical for understanding the importance of this study. It will also create an understanding of why research on this topic may help be useful in the field of student affairs.

College Student Population

Today's student population is more diverse than previous generations. This section of literature will present findings on the demographic information on the current generation of college students. The literature will provide information on how students differ from each other with regard to race, ethnicity, gender, ability, and family background (including socio-economic status and education). Particularly, the literature will examine how student differences impact their education. Lastly, the section examines the retention and educational goals of the students. The provided literature is important to this study when understanding student retention.

Demographic Differences

A snapshot of today's college enrollment represents a diverse student population. Students' attributes (such as sex, race and ability), precollege experiences (such as academic and social attainments, and grade-point average), and family backgrounds (social status, value climates) all have a direct and indirect impact on college performance (Tinto, 1975). Tinto proposed that those three areas contribute greatly to goal commitment and institutional commitment. Goals and a commitment to a school are large factors in a student's decision to dropout (Tinto, 1975).

The diversity of today's student population has contributed to background characteristics, attitudes, values, educational achievements, and future goals that are very different from the student population of the last forty years (Astin, Parrott, Korn, & Sax, 1997). A review of research and literature regarding the demographic differences of the college student population can create an understanding of the values, achievements and future goals.

The majority of the college student enrollment is comprised of recent high school graduates who wait less than one year after graduation to start college (Bissonnette, 2010). In 2009, an estimated 70.1% of high school graduates enrolled in college: a 1.5% increase from 2008 (Bissonnette, 2010). These students start college right after high school, usually with the intentions to achieve a higher career goal or becoming trained for a specific profession. College students who are enrolling in college just out of high school and who move away from home for the first time, but not to be in the real world, have been referred to as semi-autonomous (Bozick, 2007). They have moved away from home, but they are not completely autonomous, as they have not started families of their own.

Millennial Generation

Today, the majority of college students, being comprised of recent high school graduates, fit into the millennial student generation. Millennial students are typically defined as students who were born between 1981 and 2000, the generation proceeding after Generation X (Howe, & Strauss, 2000). The Pew Research Center has found that the millennial generation is the most racially and ethnically diverse generation to date, the most “politically aggressive” in the 2008 presidential election and they are the most accepting of interracial dating than the three generations preceding them (Keeter, & Taylor, 2009). According to Howe and Strauss, the millennial generation is the generation that will “quit talking and start doing (Howe & Strauss, 2000).”

Millennials tend to be more structured rule followers when compared with Generation X, which is evident through being more trusting of policies and procedures (Howe & Strauss, 2000). However, this trust is built from a clear understanding and

explanation of the materials, such as class or job assignments, projects and tasks (Brownstein, 2000). Millennial students will be a lot more understanding if reasons for assignments or activities are explained or provided. Explaining to students or answering students' questions may provide the trust they are looking for within the classroom.

An additional characteristic of millennials that may have an impact on their role in the classroom is their cooperative and team oriented mentality. Millennial students have worked in groups or teams in the classroom throughout primary and secondary school, which has helped as "...they have developed skills that not only ensure mutual-inclusiveness, but also the expectation that all members do their part" (Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007). The team work background should predispose millennials to evaluating projects according to merit and providing constructive feedback to group work (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Faculty may expect this generation will have a strong desire to succeed on projects by working together on projects that have meaning (Zemke, 2001).

Racial & Ethnic Diversity

The millennial generation is the least Caucasian and most racially and ethnically diverse generation in U.S. history (Howe & Strauss, 2007). The Minorities in Higher Education Annual Status Report revealed that minority college enrollment has increased 122% over the last two decades (Reynolds, 2004). Primarily Caucasian student populations are now experiencing changes on campus.

College enrollment rates for African Americans have risen 56% in twenty years and the African American college graduation rate increased 33% from 1991 to 2001 (Reynolds, 2004). Historically Black Colleges and Universities accounted for more than 20% of all bachelor's degrees earned by African Americans (Reynolds, 2004).

Gender Differences

Gender differences have changed on campus over the last forty years. The proportion of women in college has increased tremendously over the last thirty years. In the amount of time women have been attending college, they have become the majority of enrolled students, with enrollment trends attributing greatly to the Women's Movement (Astin, Parrot, Korn, & Sax, 1997).

Not only has the enrollment of women increased, but also first-year women with aspirations for advanced degrees increased from 40% in 1966 to 67% in 1996 (Astin, Parrott, Korn, & Sax, 1997). African American women are more likely than their male counterparts to pursue advanced degrees, at an estimated 42% of women over 37% of men (Reynolds, 2004). In addition to having increased aspirations for advanced degrees when compared with men, women are more likely than men to complete bachelor's degrees, regardless of the time spent in college (Astin, Tsui, & Avalos, 1996).

Today, female enrollment in higher education is higher than male enrollment, but this has not had either a positive or negative impact on student development. One study found that students' cognitive development was not impacted by an increase of women in the classroom or women in any academic major (Sax, 1996).

Students with Disabilities

Enrollment diversity includes changes in the enrollment of students with disabilities. A study revealed about 6% of all first-time, full-time students enrolled in college during the fall of 2000 at four-year institutions reported having a disability (Henderson, 2001). Almost two and a half percent reported having a learning disability, while the remaining three and a half percent reported disabilities related to partially

sighted or blind, health-related, orthopedic, hearing, speech or other disabilities. College freshman reporting a learning disability is at 40%, which is up from 16% in 1988.

Disabilities are on the increase for college students (Henderson, 2001).

There is also an increase in mental health issues for college students. A survey of 275 schools in 10 states provided data that students with psychiatric issues are using services from disabilities offices (Collins & Mowbray, 2005). “An epidemiological study estimated that 20% of college freshman should be considered disturbed and in need of mental health care, consistent with mental health prevalence rates for the population at large” (Collins & Mowbray, 2005). College freshman are accessing their disabilities services offices.

Family Background

From 1970 to 2000, the number of “married” households fell from 70% to 53%. As a result, one of four children in the United States is being raised in a single-parent household (Curley, 2003). A study reported that between 1972 and 1996, the percentage of college students coming from broken households of either divorced or separated parents tripled, with roughly one-fourth of the entering freshman coming from such families in 1996 (Astin, Parrott, Korn & Sax, 1997).

A family’s socioeconomic status (SES) has been linked to impacting student enrollment and degree major choice in higher education. Students of a lower family SES are recognized as disadvantaged and are less likely to persist or to attend graduate school (Walpole, 2003). Students from lower SES families are more prone to choosing lucrative college majors, such as computer science and engineering, possibly allowing college

major choice to “...weaken the disadvantageous effect of family background, thereby providing a means for upward mobility for lower SES students” (Ma, 2009).

Family support has been proven particularly important to the academic success of minority students. One article cited a study that found parents of African American students expected to be involved in their children’s education, the parents were emotionally supportive of their students and the acceptance of the parents’ standards was a factor leading to student success (Herndon & Hirt, 2004). Family support has been a proven influence for student success.

Demographic Relevance

The college population has become more diverse. Understanding the demographics of the college student population is important when investigating the retention of these students and what will attribute to reenrollment in school. This section will examine what research has suggested about the ways diversity and student demographics in school impact students.

Increased diversity may impact the students’ learning experience. “The evidence is almost uniformly consistent in indicating that students in a racial/ethnically or gender-diverse community, or engaged in a diversity-related activity, reap a wide array of positive educational benefits” (Terenzini, et al., 2001). Previous studies have linked forms of diversity to higher rates of retention for minority students (Bowen & Bok, 2000), to a greater openness to further diversity and challenge (Pascarella, et al., 1996), and “a more positive academic and social self-concept” (Terenzini, et al., 2001).

Exposure to diversity through experiences or activities contributes positively to education and self-concept. Racial diversity on campus has an effect on learning-

outcomes through diversity-related experiences and student interactions and experiences (Chang, 1999). Research has shown that a diverse student population benefits academic performance and student interactions.

When students interact with each other, they increase their potential to achieve academic goals, making peer interactions very important for their education. Knowledge is shaped through student involvement and interactions with peers (Moran & Gonyea, 2003). Positive student interactions increase retention and students' ability to graduate (Pascarella, Terenzini & Blimling, 1994). Student interaction has a positive impact on their achievement.

These peer interactions don't just happen inside the classroom. A lot of their learning opportunities occur in interactions outside of the classroom setting between students and others in their social settings (Stimpson, 1994). Cognitive complexity, interest in the welfare of others, interpersonal and intrapersonal competence, and practical competence are all values that can be attributed to the out-of-class experience (Kuh, 1994). Student experiences outside of the classroom are extremely important to student learning and development.

Campus Housing

This section will examine campus housing. There will be a brief history of residence halls and on-campus living in the United States, including the changes to the styles of on-campus housing over the decades. There is a lot of literature regarding an increased connection between on-campus living and academics, and the creation of living-learning communities. Lastly, this section will review the impact of campus housing on students, including the involvement of students who live on campus, the

grades and retention of students who live on campus and the role the physical structure has on student interactions and connections. The impact of campus housing, including the different styles of campus housing, on the students, relates directly to the research question of this study.

Residence Hall History

Colonial Americans studied the already existing European university system while developing colleges in America. On campus residence derived from students who traveled far from home to study. Faculty members provided supervision of students, and a perception was developed that university staff and faculty would look after, discipline, supervise and advise the students (Schroeder & Mable, 1994). An *in loco parentis* approach to working with students was taken by many universities for decades. At the end of the 19th century, many colleges became dedicated to creating student housing. Through the following decades, states provided funding for residence halls and the Public Works Administration provided federal funding for construction through the depression era (Frederiksen, 1993).

The 1950s and 1960s created the expansion of on-campus housing at many public and private institutions (Astin, 1977a). Title IV of the Housing Act of 1950 provided federal support for construction of residence halls to house the increased student enrollment after World War II (Frederiksen, 1993). Housing was constructed in the efficient design to hold many students, creating the dormitory-style, high-rise facilities (Frederiksen, 1993).

The 1960s and 1970s patterns of students moving off campus were attributed to the activist movement and the option for more privacy living quarters, but students found

the living on campus to be more cost efficient in the 1970s, creating a continued need for on-campus housing (Astin, 1977a). On campus housing has continued across the country.

For a long time, residence halls had been recognized as a place where first-year students could be educated and controlled (Upcraft & Gardner, 1990). Housing rules were applied and followed by students. In the 1960s, students who started questioning many of the on-campus rules that infringed on their personal freedom, were able to eliminate rules because housing departments had no evidence to support the policies (Upcraft, 1987). Students living on campus gained new freedom and had fewer rules applied to them.

The 1970s started major research on the benefits of living on campus. The early research concluded that students who lived on campus were more likely to graduate in four years than their peers who lived off campus (Astin, 1973). One of Astin's (1977b) later studies found that a large factor influencing graduation was where a student lived campus their first year. While this research was leading in the field at the time, it supported a purpose for on-campus housing and it could show the benefits students would receive for living on campus.

Changes to Campus Housing

For a long time, the most common on-campus housing option has been the residence halls, or dormitory style housing. Today, the traditional style living environments will not meet the expectations of students when state of the art facilities attract student interest. New residential facilities should be customized for space for

activities and new technology (Strange & Banning, 2001). These facilities will not only assist to recruit students, but they can support student success and learning.

Halls are being built to accommodate the wants of the students and to meet the goals of the institution. They can be built in many forms, but possess very similar characteristics, including an emphasis on shared, common space used for academics, socializing or activities (Godshall, 2000). Some provide the additional amenities that students want, such as fitness rooms, dining facilities, computer labs, practice rooms or study rooms (Kennedy, 2002). Some schools are remodeling or upgrading existing buildings to have these amenities that appeal to students. The purpose of these facilities is beyond providing a place for sleeping and bathing (Curley, 2003).

Some schools have created coeducational residence hall floors with coed bathrooms (Marquardt & Glenn, 2001). Gender-neutral housing has been opened on some campuses as a housing option for GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered) students (Smith, 2008). These changes to housing are meant to be inclusive for students. These halls are used to create a sense of community for the students who live there (Godshall, 2000).

Creating multiple communities out of larger residence halls is a good way to help students feel they are part of close community (Heilwiel, 1973). One way to design smaller communities in a residence hall is to create suites, or a group of rooms that share a common space (Corbett, 1973). While suite style halls may not be the best environments for all students, they allow for close interactions, while still providing students with privacy. Students may be participating in a variety of activities, have common space and have personal space (Corbett, 1973).

Over the years, the routine maintenance, renovations, and compliance with regulations can become a costly adventure and sometimes an engineering feat for housing (Blimling, 1993). Considering the facilities issues facing campuses, and the expectations of today's students, some schools have started using privatized housing arrangements.

Learning Communities

Some in the education field have pushed for a commitment from institutions to create an effective community-building approach for student learning and development, using the residence halls (Kuh, 1994). A residential life focus on restructuring to meet institutional goals, such as enhancing student learning, creating community and student engagement, has formed the living learning communities (Kezar, 2006). One-definition states learning communities are a purposeful reconstruction of curriculum to connect courses so students find coherence in what they learn, as well as interaction with faculty and fellow students (Gablenick, et al., 1990). Regardless of how schools individually define learning communities, they have some common goals, such as the focus on academics or interest areas and social features (Brower & Dettinger, 1998).

These communities placed students together in a community based on group interests or academic areas to increase student engagement and expand out-of-classroom experience (LaNasa, Olson & Alleman, 2007). Learning communities have been identified in four forms; as curricular learning communities made up of students co-enrolled in two or more courses that are linked by common themes, as classroom learning communities that act as a point of community-building and focus on group learning, as residential learning communities that have on campus living so that students taking

classes together live in close physical proximity, and as student learning communities designed for targeted student groups (Lenning, & Ebbers, 1999).

Institutions have recognized that students learn outside of the academic classroom and try to connect classroom education to out-of-class experiences (Kennedy, 2002). Schools that take a holistic approach to student learning strive to educate students outside of the classroom as well (Kuh, et al., 1994). Institutions have started creating housing areas that are or have been connected to academics to help continue the out-of-classroom educational experience.

Student development theory supports the use of learning communities. Developmental theory encourages educators to design learning environments that both challenge and support students to move into higher levels of intellectual and psychological development (Zhoa, & Kuh, 2004). This happens in living learning communities when students grow and change in response to opposing forces or influences into a student's existing understanding or way of responding (Baxter-Magolda, 1992; King & Kitchner 1994). As a result, educators need to support the students to match the challenges of a new environment (Sanford, 1962). If this development works correctly, students are exposed to new ideas, diverse perspectives and supported by others in their community or the faculty that work closely within the learning communities.

Residential living learning communities benefit the students. Students who participate in learning communities were more engaged and had higher return rates and had higher intellectual and social development when compared with peers who did not participate in living learning communities (Shapiro & Levine, 1999). Involvement in learning communities has been linked to positive academic performance, engagement in

educational activities and is associated with an overall positive satisfaction with the college experience (Zhoa & Kuh, 2004). Overall, students who participate in living learning communities benefit in more ways than their peers who do not participate in living learning communities.

Campus Housing Influences & Impacts

Kurt Lewin (1936) stated early that one's environment is defined by built or perceived elements that might influence how a person is able to act or react in a situation. Lewin theorized that behaviors are the function of people and their environment. This theory was just the start of research regarding how residence halls impact and influence the students. Numerous studies attribute the impact made by the student's living environment.

It is estimated that there will be more than two million first-time freshman, enrolled in degree-granting institutions each year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Almost a third of new students will live on campus during their first year of college (King, 2002). Living away from home for the first time can be a difficult adjustment for some students, making the transition to college more difficult or making it harder for students to create a connection (Grayson, 2003).

While students who move away from home may have to adjust to their new college environment, students who live on campus often experience greater gain than students who don't live on campus (Kuh, et al., 1994). Some students enjoy the community that is built within their living area. They feel a sense of belonging that is built through socializing with others (Kennedy, 2002). Research suggests that students who live on-campus make connections to their institution. Campus housing is

fundamental to collegiate life and to student development, allowing students who live, eat and socialize in their on-campus community to feel a sense of belonging (Kennedy, 2002).

Studies have suggested that students are more content with their housing experience when they have interactions with others. In 2002, Educational Benchmarking, Inc. (EBI) determined the top predictor of satisfaction with housing was interactions with others (Curley, 2003). This included the ability to meet people, the ability to resolve conflicts and the ability to improve interpersonal relationships. Students are most satisfied with their housing experience when they can interact with others, implying that students want interactions with each other while they live on campus.

In addition to wanting interaction with others, students who live on campus are more likely to be actively involved and have greater opportunities to learn from their peers than students who live off campus or at home (Chickering, 1974). Arthur Chickering (1974) found that on campus residents were more involved with academic and co-curricular activities with other students and they earned higher grade point averages, even with differences in ability taken into consideration.

Studies have suggested that on-campus students experience greater artistic, cultural and intellectual value (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). These opportunities for involvement and peer interactions in campus housing create and foster a community. Students who are involved in an institution and connected to people or a community are more likely to persist in school and less likely to drop out (Kennedy, 2005). Also, a sense of community within the living environment can create a sense of ownership, which leads to less vandalism and damages, as well as a stronger connection to the institution

(Schroeder & Jackson, 1987). The opportunities that students have on campus and in their community make them more likely not to drop out, allowing housing to have a positive impact on the students.

Studies have suggested on-campus living impacts, not just the social opportunities and the involvement of students, but the academic achievement as well. Astin suggested that students who lived on campus were more likely to stay enrolled, to graduate in four years and to apply for advanced degrees than students who live off campus (1977b). The academic success can be applied to all students during college. Seniors living on campus during their four year of college were more likely to be active in student organizations and less likely to be on academic probation than students who lived off campus (Moos & Lee, 1979).

Research has supported that even the physical structure of a building influences student interactions. The design of a building can affect how people move within the environment, and the design of a residence hall can influence how students interact with each other within the space (Ellen, 1982; Hamrick, et al., 2002). Strange and Banning (2001) suggest that the material factors in the environment, like wall placement, lighting and floor materials can have an impact on the acts and decisions. If the structure of a hall can impact how students interact, the different style of on-campus housing with different physical structures, whether traditional hall, suite style or on-campus apartment, could impact how students interact.

Residence halls "...have the potential to challenge and educate students as they connect their learning experiences to their living realities. Furthermore, residence halls can create a curriculum that integrates knowledge, skills, and attitudes and focuses on the

applications of learning” (Schroeder, & Mable, 1994). Residence halls are recognized as a place of increased learning opportunities and they can create opportunities for student involvement (LaNasa, Olson & Alleman, 2007). Overall, residence halls and on campus living has a positive impact on graduation rates, social involvement and collegiate satisfaction (Pascarella, et al., 1994).

Retention Rates

Persistence in school until a degree is completed has been reported as important for a university, and for the students’ success. This section will define retention and attrition in the collegiate setting. The literature regarding what impacts retention provided in this chapter includes student involvement and commitment to the university, on-campus housing, academic performance and demographic information such as year in school, family background, and college expenses. The study will examine graduation rates and retention of students who live on campus, so understanding what impacts retention is important for this study.

Retention & Attrition

The basic definition of retention is students who enroll in college and remain enrolled until their degree is complete (Hagedorn, 2005). Vincent Tinto pioneered a retention model and the importance of a student’s integration into a school in the 1970s and 1980s. Since then, studies on retention have helped to explore and change operations within the field of student affairs.

There are varying definitions of how long it should take a student to complete a degree, or graduate. If a student has not completed a degree in a certain amount of time, the student is not considered in the retention information for that time period. The

American College Testing (ACT) gives students five years to complete a degree and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) gives students six years to complete a degree to be part of the retention information produced by the institution (Hagedorn, 2005). The National Center for Education Statistics (2003) found that 23.2% of all of first time students starting at a four-year institution in 1995 transferred to another school by the end of the sixth year, creating the six-year retention rate. Studies have shown that additional time for degree completion after the common six-year period made very little difference on degree attainment for students at four-year universities (Peltier, Laden, & Matranga, 2000). The degree achievement further than six years increases very slightly, causing most schools to end retention at the six-year mark. The measurement of retention varies in length by who measures it (Hagedorn, 2005).

Retention also means completing the degree at the same college or university the degree was started. A student, who transfers to another school, even if they graduate from that school, cannot be counted in the first school's retention rates. "...A graduate can only claim one institution regardless of prior enrollment at other colleges or universities..." (Hagedorn, 2005). Graduation rates are clearly not the same as retention rates while both are measures under the heading of retention (Hagedorn, 2005).

Attrition has widely been recognized as the opposite of retention. Students who do not persist or return to college decrease the retention rate and increase the attrition rates. Students do not return for several reasons. A longitudinal study found almost 60% of students who left school had transferred to another university or college, and the remaining 40% of students who left, did so willingly or because of academic performance (Wintre & Morgan, 2006).

Schools with high transfer rates, high dropout rates, and low completion rates have lower retention rates when compared to other schools. Higher education administrators value high retention rates, because high retention helps ensure high enrollment numbers and it secures revenue for the institution (Glynn, Sauer, & Miller, 2003). Schools work to raise retention rates as a result.

Research on retention is important for schools to understand the financial impact that retention has on an institution. Budgets play a significant role in higher education. Increasing attrition rates and decreases in federal and state funding contribute to the financial struggles of many colleges and universities (Dennis, 1998). At some schools, like Suffolk University, retention management is more important than enrollment management, because "...retention is responsible for 75% of a school's population and tuition revenues" (Dennis, 1998). Schools rely on student enrollment, and persistence to sustain a budget.

Factors Impacting Retention

There was a large increase of research on student retention, attrition and persistence in the 1970s, in the hopes that universities will better understand why students leave and in the hopes that universities will make the necessary student success. Through the decades, many factors have impacted student retention.

Administration

For a long time, it has been suggested that administrative behaviors may have a strong influence on whether a student stays or leaves (Astin & Scherrei, 1980). More specifically, a student's participation in a student's ability to make decision or the choices they are allowed to make versus the decisions made by school administration, and

communication issues have been found to affect student departure decisions (Braxton & Brier, 1989; Berger & Braxton, 1998).

Involvement & Commitment

Research has linked a commitment to academic goals in college as having a positive impact on retention. “Personal commitment to either an academic or occupational goal is the single most important determinant of persistence in college” (Cope & Hannah, 1975). An example of the importance of the academic goal is that students who have not declared a major leave at a much higher rate than other students (Dennis, 1998). There is a connection between the commitment that students’ have to their career goals and students’ retention.

Studies have shown that a commitment to an institution proves valuable for student retention (Pascarella, & Terenzini, 1980; Mallette, & Cabrera, 1991). Tinto (1987) suggested that retention is related to a student’s involvement in and connection to the school he or she attends. That connection creates a deep institutional investment, which results in higher rates of student retention (Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996b). A student who is involved and connected with the school he or she attends is more likely to stay in school until graduation.

Institutional commitment may be the result of a family tradition in college choice, from family or friend pressure, or from the role an institution places in one’s occupational goals (Tinto, 1993). If a student’s lacks commitment to an institution, they are more likely to withdraw prior to graduation. If a student is not involved and does not feel connected to their institution, it might be assumed that the student is not satisfied with the school. Satisfaction is an indicator of retention rates (Pascarella, et al., 1994).

On-Campus Housing

Living on campus affects retention, as students who live on campus are more likely to persist and graduate (Astin, 1977b; Herndon, 1984). Velez (1985) reported that where a person lives has the most significant effect on their probability to graduate, with on-campus residents more likely to graduate than off campus residents. Particularly, first year students who live on campus are more likely to return to school the following year (Bozick, 2007). One study suggested that living on campus was not associated with a higher grade point average, but was associated with enhanced progress and higher retention (Thompson, Samiratedu, & Rafter, 1993).

On campus living increases the opportunity for student interaction and involvement. Student interaction and involvement allow for student connects to the school her or she attends, making him or her more likely to stay. Residence halls provide an opportunity for involvement and interaction (Chickering, 1974; Kennedy, 2005; LaNasa, Olsen, & Alleman, 2007), increasing persistence and likeliness to graduate. The conclusions to studies regarding housing increasing a student's interaction with others, their involvement, their persistence and their likeliness to graduate are directly related to this study.

Academics

The ACT reported certain academic and non-academic factors played a role in the retention of students. "Our findings indicate that the non-academic factors of academic-related skills, academic self-confidence, academic goals, institutional commitment, social support, certain contextual influences (institutional selectivity and financial support), and social involvement all had a positive relationship to retention" (Lotkowski, Robbins &

Noeth, 2004). Others indicated that the higher a GPA was meant the more likely the student was to persist to the next year (Murtaugh, Burns & Schuster, 1999).

Active learning was found to have an effect on retention. Four forms of active learning include classroom discussion, knowledge level examination questions, group work and higher order thinking activities (Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000). Faculty classroom behaviors have an influence on student attrition. Classroom discussion, knowledge level examination and higher order thinking activities wielded a significant influence on attrition, affecting social integration, subsequent institutional commitment and students' intent to return (Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000). Academic performance and learning are factors in student retention.

First-Year College Students

Recently, schools have focused attention on first-year students, as students are more likely to drop out before their sophomore year than anytime after. A ten-year study found that 75% of freshman persisted to their sophomore year and their graduation rates were between 56-60% at the end of six years (Glynn, Sauer, & Miller, 2003). The lowest persistence was from freshman to sophomore year, meaning that the freshman year experience, including all of the factors examined so far, is essential to retention.

Among the already examined factors that impact retention, grade point average (GPA) in particular is important for student retention. It has been suggested that many schools want to improve first-year student GPA because studies have suggested GPA has a very strong influence on drop-out behaviors (DesJardins, Ahlburg, & McCall, 1999; Ishanti & DesJardins, 2002). Some schools spend money and time on helping first-year students adjust to college, through freshman orientation classes and first-year living

environments to help these students become successful.

First Generation College Students

First year students face persistence issues, but first-generation college students, defined as those students whose parents did not graduate from college (Ishitani, 2003), have a lower retention rate than most first year students.

“...First-generation students are more likely to leave a four-year institution at the end of the first year, less likely to remain enrolled in a four-year institution or be on a persistence track to a bachelor’s degree after three years, and are less likely to stay enrolled or attain a bachelor’s degree after five years” (Pascarella, et al., 2004).

This attrition might not be related to GPA, because studies have found first-generation college students do not have lower grades in college than their peers (Strage, 1999; Inman & Mayes, 1999). The lower retention could be because first-generation students have been found to have lower critical thinking abilities, less support from family in attending college (Terenzini et al., 1996a). This would suggest that family support and critical thinking ability are factors of the retention of first-generation college students.

Cost of College

From 2000-2010, the published tuition and fees at public four-year institutions has increased at an average rate of 5.6% each year, beyond the rate of inflation (College Board, 2010). Pell grants, the largest federal program designed to assist low-income families in paying for college, have not keep up with the rising cost of tuition (Bozick, 2007). The high cost of college causes many students to hold part-time jobs while enrolled in school to pay the bills. In one study, approximately 33% of the employed

first-year students reported that tuition and living expenses were reasons for working (Bozick, 2007).

A study has suggested that the cost of college may be why from 2001 to 2009, full-time students enrolled in four-year public and private non-profit institutions decreased from 74% to 67%, and part-time students decreased from 40% to 38% percent (College Board, 2010). Students' who are unable to pay for school or who are unable to take more loans are dropping out.

Summary

In summary, today's student population is of a diverse background, bringing to college a diverse set of backgrounds characteristics, attitudes, values, educational achievements, and future goals (Astin, et al., 1997). These students vary in race and ethnic background, gender, ability, family background, precollege experiences and preparedness and more. Evidence indicating that "...students in a racial/ethnically or gender-diverse community, or engaged in a diversity-related activity, reap a wide array of positive educational benefits" (Terenzini, et al., 2001).

When this diverse group of students has positive interactions through student involvement, they increase their potential to achieve academic goals, they share knowledge, and they increase retention and their ability to graduate (Bowen & Bok, 2000; Moran & Gonyea, 2003; Pascarella, Terenzini & Blimling, 1994).

These interactions can take place within the residence halls on campus. Residence halls are recognized as a place of increased learning opportunities and they can create opportunities for student involvement (LaNasa, Olson & Alleman, 2007). Students who live on campus are more likely to be actively involved and have greater

opportunities to learn from their peers than students who live off campus or at home (Chickering, 1974). This involvement within a community can help students who live on campus excel developmentally (Baxter-Magolda, 1992; King and Kitchner 1994), socially and academically (Schroeder, & Mable, 1994; Kennedy, 2005; Zhao, & Kuh, 2004).

Students who are connected to their institution, connected to people or a community, through involvement, are more likely to persist in school and less likely to drop out (Kennedy, 2005). Overall, residence halls and on campus living has a positive impact on graduation rates, social involvement and collegiate satisfaction (Pascarella, et al., 1994). As a result, institutions are creating halls that work towards meeting institutional goals, that connect living to learning with a focus on education outside the classroom, and that build a community, while appealing to the students (Curley, 2003; Godshall, 2000; Kennedy, 2005).

Student persistence is important for the financial stability and operations of the institution. Understanding the factors of student retention (or attrition) helps school combat a loss of stability (Dennis, 1998). Retention has been defined as a student's persistence in school through the years, graduating from the same institution they've started their degree (Hagedorn, 2005). The measurement of retention varies by who measures it and time at which it is measured, most commonly measured in four, five or six years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003; Hagedorn, 2005).

Numerous studies have found factors that attribute to a loss of persistence or attrition. Tinto (1987) found that retention related to a student's involvement and

connection to their institution. Those connections create a deep institutional investment that result in a satisfaction with the institution (Pascarella, et al., 1994), and higher rates of student retention (Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996b). Grade point average and family support both impact retention and persistence in school, especially for first-generation college students or first-year college students (DesJardins, Ahlburg, & McCall, 1999; Ishanti & DesJardins, 2002; Terenzini, et al., 1996a). Students who live on campus are more likely to persist than their off-campus peers (Astin, 1977b) because on-campus housing provides increased possibilities for interactions and involvement (Chickering, 1974; Kennedy, 2005; LaNasa, Olsen, & Alleman, 2007).

However, no research has been conducted on the graduation rates of first year students who live in the different styles of on campus housing. There is no available research regarding how long it takes a student to graduate if there live in one style of on-campus housing over another; those halls being traditional halls, suite style halls and apartments. This study will examine if where a first-year student lives on campus, in suite style, traditional hall or apartments, will impact the students' ability to graduate in four, five or six years.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine first what percent of college students who live in traditional halls, apartments and suite style halls graduate, and second, among those who complete their degree, how many semesters did it take them to finish on average?

The hypothesis of this study states first, there is no significant difference between where a student lives on campus their first year of college and if they will graduate and second, there is no significant difference in measures among where a student lives on campus during their first year of college and how many semesters it will take students to graduate.

This chapter will explain how the study is set up to be able to analyze the findings. This section includes the participant criteria and the participants' demographic information. Sources of data and the data collection are described. Finally, the statistical analysis methods used in this study are included.

Participants

This study is being conducted on a campus where first year students who live more than 30 miles from the campus are required to live on campus. Students must pick

an on-campus residence based on availability of housing options when they sign-up online. Students returning to campus can pick their on-campus residence before new students, meaning some preferred housing options may be filled before new students are able to select their housing preference. Not every student will be able to live in their first choice housing option. Participants in this study were first year students who lived on campus in the fall semester of 2004 at a large, public institution located in the Midwest. All participants were first year college students in the fall of 2004.

According to the information published on the university's institutional research website, in the fall of 2004, there were 3,263 first year students, comprising 13.81% of the undergraduate and graduate enrollment at the institution in the fall of 2004. The majority of first year students, 78.49%, were in-state residents and, 95.46% were enrolled as full-time students.

From the first year students, 2,682 (82.19%) identified as White, 271 students (8.30%) identified as Native American, 139 students (4.24%) identified as African American, 62 students (1.90%) identified as Hispanic, 58 students (1.77%) identified as Asian and 51 students (1.56%) were international students. The percent of first year women enrolled, or 1,679 students, to first year men enrolled, or 1,584 students were 51.45% women or 48.54% men.

In the fall of 2004, approximately 2,790 new students had taken the ACT. Of those students, a score of 23 was the mean, received by 11.83% of the students. Another 10.39% of students received a 24 and 9.86% of students received a 22. Those three test scores were received by almost a third of the students who took the ACT. Another 460 students received a 20 or lower on the ACT, while 300 students received a 30 or higher.

Fifteen percent of the students in the fall of 2004 reported having a 4.0 GPA in high school (from the reported GPAs). The average high school GPA reported was 3.51. Fourteen percent of the new students in the fall of 2004, or 408 students, were ranked in the top five percent of their high school class (from reported high school ranks). A third of the new students were ranked in the top 15% of their high school class.

Participants in this study were first year students who lived on campus in the fall semester of 2004. There were a total of 3,146 students who lived on campus for the first time in the fall semester of 2004. The three different styles of on campus housing that the participants lived in were traditional halls, suite halls and apartments. There were 255 first year students, 8.1% of the participants, who lived in seven different apartment buildings, 1,017 first year college students, 32.3% of the participants, who lived in seven different suite style halls, and 1,874 first year college students, 59.6% of participants, who lived in seven traditional halls.

In this study, there were 1,374 male participants. Males were 43.7% of the first year students living on campus. There were 1,771 female participants. Females were 56.3% of the first year students living on campus.

Data Collection

All data for this thesis was pre-existing and available for analysis. Data from this study was collected from two different departments within the university. First, data was collected from the Department of Housing and Residential Life and second, data was collected from the Department of Institutional Research.

To collect data from the department of Housing and Residential Life, approval and consent was received from the director of the department. The department's program

analyst was contacted via email and phone to provide a list of the first year students who lived on campus in the fall semester of 2004. The three pieces of data provided for each student included their campus wide identification number (CWID), the sex of the student and the style of hall that the student lived in their first year. The CWID is an eight-digit number that a student receives when they apply to the school and is used to identify that student without using a social security number. The sex of the student is female or male. The three types of halls that the students lived in are suite, traditional hall or apartment. Housing and Residential Life provided a list of all the new students who lived on campus in the fall of 2004. This list was provided in a Microsoft excel spreadsheet.

In 2004, Housing and Residential Life collected their student data through the Student Information System (SIS), used by the university. The department extracts that information and imports it into a program called the Housing Information System (HIS) at the beginning of the semesters. Once each school year started, resident information was imported into HIS manually. Since 2004, the department upgraded to new software and now stores all their data on Starrez. All previous data has been uploaded from HIS to Starrez. The information on Starrez includes information on each student, including their year in school, their CWID, and where they lived on campus each year from the time they move into a room and the time they move out of a room.

With research approval and an approved open records request form for the university, the CWIDs of the first year students in the fall of 2004 were given to the office of Institutional Research on the Microsoft excel spreadsheet. A programming analyst from the office of Institutional Research placed the CWIDs into the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) software to retrieve the students' graduation dates. SAS directly

retrieves graduation dates from the university's Student Information System. The Student Information System is a university database containing information for all students, including when a student graduates. Using SAS, the office of Institutional Research provided the semester and the year that the student graduated, or if a student has not yet graduated. All data received from institutional research was in a Microsoft excel spreadsheet.

Data Analysis

In this study, the independent variable for both of the research questions is the type of housing style: traditional hall, suite hall or apartment. For the first research question, the dependent variable is the percent of students who graduate from the institution. For the second research question, the dependent variable in this study is how many semesters were needed to graduate. The hypothesis states:

1. There is no significant difference between where a student lives on campus their first year of college and if they will graduate.
2. There is no significant difference among where a student lives on campus during their first year of college and how many semesters it will take students to graduate.

To support the first hypothesis, a Chi Square test was used. First, a Chi Square cross tabulation compared the expected number of students who should graduate to the actual number of students who did graduate. Second, a Pearson Chi Square determined if there was a statistically significant difference between the students expected to graduate and the actual count of students who did graduate.

To support the second hypothesis, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was

completed in SPSS version 17. To analyze the data in SPSS, the variables were coded. Traditional halls were coded 1, suite style halls were coded 2 and apartments were coded 3. Men were coded as 1 and women were coded as 2. Each student also received a code for when they graduated. Students can graduate in three different semesters each year; in the fall semester, the spring semester and the summer semester. The dependent variable is coded with a number for each semester. The fall 2004 semester was coded 1, the spring 2004 semester was coded 2, and the summer 2004 semester was coded as 3. The coding continues by adding a number to the subsequent semester. The coding in the summer semester of 2010, coded as 18, as the end of the sixth year of college. Any students who do not graduate within the end of the sixth year are coded as 0. Students who were still enrolled at the end of six years were also coded as -1 to keep them separate from the students who graduated and have not graduated.

To support the hypothesis, a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was completed using in SPSS to test for a significant difference between the housing styles and the semester of graduation. A Post Hoc Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the multiple styles of housing to explain the significant differences.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The results in this chapter address two research questions within this study:

1. What percent of college students who live in traditional halls, apartments and suite style halls graduate?
2. Among those who complete their degree, how many semesters did it take them to finish on average?

The hypotheses tested in this study were:

1. There is no significant difference in measures between where a student lives on campus during their first year of college and if they will graduate.
2. There is no significant difference in measures among where a student lives on campus during their first year of college and how many semesters it will take students to graduate.

The participants in this study consisted of 3,146 first year college students who lived in the three different styles of housing in the fall of 2004: 255 participants lived in apartment buildings, 1,017 participants lived in suite style halls, and 1,874 participants lived in traditional halls. In this study, 43.7% of the participants were men and 56.3% of the participants were women.

In the literature, there is sufficient information regarding the influences and impacts that on-campus housing has on students (Baxter-Magolda, 1992; Chickering, 1974; Kennedy, 2005; King & Kitchner 1994; LaNasa, Olson & Alleman, 2007; Schroeder, & Mable, 1994; Zhao, & Kuh, 2004). The literature does not provide significant information regarding the influences and impacts the different styles of on-campus housing. The results of this study will provide information on how the different styles of on-campus housing may impact how long it takes a student to graduate. As a result, this study will allow for a distinction to be made between the significance of different styles of on campus housing.

Statistical Procedures

The first research question asked what percent of college students who live in traditional halls, apartments and suite style halls graduate, within six years of college. The descriptive statistics show, of the 3,146 participants, 37.8% of the participants, or 1,190 participants, did not graduate, 59.9% of participants, or 1,885 participants, graduated and 2.2% of participants, or 71 participants, were still enrolled by the end of their sixth year of college, or by the summer semester of 2010.

Of the 1,874 participants who lived in the traditional halls as a first year student, 1,124 of these participants had graduated by the end of their sixth year of college. By the end of their sixth year of college, 59.9% of students who lived in the traditional halls graduated.

Of the 1,017 participants lived in the suite style halls as a first year students, 630 of these participants had graduated by the end of their sixth year of college. By the end of their sixth year of college 61.9% of students who lived in the suite halls graduated.

Of the 255 participants who lived in the apartments as a first year student, 131 of these participants had graduated by the end of their sixth year of college. By the end of their sixth year of college, 51.3% of students who lived in the apartments graduated.

There was a two percent graduation difference between the participants who lived in the suite style halls and the traditional halls during their first year of college. Both housing styles produced graduation rates around 60%. Students who lived in the apartments their first year of college graduated 10% less than the students who lived in the suites and 8.6% less than students who lived in the traditional halls.

The descriptive statistics show the results of the first research question is that slightly more than 60% of students who lived in suite style halls, slightly less than 60% of students who lived in traditional halls and a little over 50% of students who lived in the apartments during their first year of college graduates.

Chi Square Test

In this study, a Chi Square cross tabulation and a Pearson Chi Square test were run to determine if the three types of on-campus housing that the participants lived in (traditional halls, suite style halls, and apartments) significantly impacted graduation rates. The cross tabulation compares the expected number of students who graduate to the actual number of students who graduate. The Pearson Chi Square determines if there is a statistically significant difference between the students expected to graduate and the actual count of students who did graduate.

The Chi Square results revealed that where you live on campus during your first year of college affects graduation rates ($\chi^2_{(2)}=11.15$, $p=.004$). A statistically significant difference was found. The students who lived in traditional halls and suites were more

likely to graduate than students who lived in the apartments during their first year of college. This means that students who lived in the traditional halls and suite style halls as first year students graduated at a significantly higher rate than the students who lived in the apartments as first year students.

Table 1
Cross tabulation of Students who did and did not graduate

| | | | Graduated, Yes or No | | |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------|-------|
| | | | Did not Graduate | Graduated | Total |
| Hall Type | Traditional | Count | 706 | 1124 | 1830 |
| | | Expected Count | 708.2 | 1121.8 | 1830 |
| | Suites | Count | 363 | 630 | 993 |
| | | Expected Count | 384.3 | 608.7 | 993 |
| | Apartments | Count | 121 | 131 | 252 |
| | | Expected Count | 97.5 | 154.5 | 252 |
| | Total | Count | 1190 | 1885 | 3075 |
| | | Expected Count | 1190 | 1885 | 3075 |

Table 2
Statistically Significant in Graduation Rates and Housing

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi Square | 11.154 ^a | 2 | 0.004 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 10.958 | 2 | 0.004 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 2.183 | 1 | 0.14 |
| N of Valid Cases | 3075 | | |

a. 0 cells (0.00%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 97.52.

One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

ANOVA is a statistical procedure used to determine differences in group means.

In this study, two ANOVAs were run to explore descriptive differences between the three

types of on-campus housing that the participants lived in (traditional halls, suite style halls, and apartments).

The second research question asks how many semesters on average did it take the participants who finished their degrees to graduate. A One-Way ANOVA was used to determine how many semesters it took the students who graduated to complete their degrees. The students who did not graduate after six years of college were removed from the data to compare the means of only the students who did graduate.

As shown in Table 3, the descriptive statistics show the average graduation date was 12.19 semesters for participants in this study. The twelfth semester was the summer semester of 2008. On average, the participants started college in the fall of 2004 and graduated in 12.19 semesters ($SD=2.36$), which is the summer semester after their fourth year of school.

Table 3
Number of Semesters for Graduation

| | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | |
|-------------|------|-------|------|------------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| | N | Mean | SD | Std. Error | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Traditional | 1124 | 12.4 | 2.33 | 0.06957 | 12.2647 | 12.5378 |
| Suites | 630 | 11.89 | 2.25 | 0.08973 | 11.7706 | 12.073 |
| Apartments | 131 | 11.87 | 2.98 | 0.26077 | 11.362 | 12.3938 |
| Total | 1885 | 12.19 | 2.36 | 0.05457 | 12.0893 | 12.3033 |

The average graduation mean was provided for each of the three housing styles. The participants who lived in the apartments graduated in 11.87 semesters ($SD=2.98$). The participants who lived in the suites graduated in 11.89 semesters ($SD=2.25$). The participants who lived in the traditional halls graduated in 12.4 semesters ($SD=2.33$). On average, students who lived in the apartments and suites graduated in the spring semester

of 2008. On average, they were able to graduate in four years. Participants who lived in the traditional halls were enrolled in school .51 semesters longer than students who lived in the suites and .53 semesters longer students who lived in the apartments.

Subsequently, students who live in the traditional halls graduated in the semester after the graduates from the suite halls and apartments, on average. The participants in the suites and apartments graduated in over eleven semesters, or four years of school, and the participants in traditional halls graduated in the summer semester after the participants from the suites and apartments graduated.

The ANOVA found that there is a significant difference in which style of housing the participants lived in during their first year and how many semesters it took participants to graduate ($F_{(2,1882)}=10.53, p<.001$). The results of research question number two is that there is a difference in where students live on campus during their first year of college and how many semesters it will take the student to graduate.

Post Hoc Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The second ANOVA, a Post Hoc ANOVA, was used to find the significant differences between the three styles of housing. The Post Hoc found there is a significant difference in the number of semesters it took participants in the traditional halls and the suite style halls to graduate ($p<.001$). A significant difference was found in the number of semesters it took participants in the traditional halls and the apartments to graduate ($p=.043$). There is not a significant difference for the number of semesters it took participants in the suites and the apartments to graduate. To explain the results to the second research question, students who live in the suite style housing and the apartments during their first year of college are able to graduate in fewer semesters than the students

who live in the traditional halls during their first year of college. Table 5 shows the multiple housing style comparison of the significant difference.

Table 4
Significant Difference

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|------|-------------|--------|------|
| Between Groups | 116.99 | 2 | 58.49 | 10.527 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 10458.37 | 1882 | 5.55 | | |
| Total | 10575.37 | 1884 | | | |

Table 5
Multiple Comparison of Significant Difference

| (I) Hall Type | (J) Hall Type | | | | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|------------|-------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Traditional | Suites | 0.50442 * | 0.11732 | 0 | 0.2292 | 0.7796 |
| | Apartments | 0.52338 * | 0.21763 | 0.043 | 0.0129 | 1.0339 |
| Suites | Traditional | -0.50442 * | 0.11732 | 0 | -0.7796 | -0.2292 |
| | Apartments | 0.01896 | 0.22636 | 0.996 | -0.512 | 0.5499 |
| Apartments | Traditional | -0.52338 * | 0.21763 | 0.043 | -1.0039 | -0.0129 |
| | Suites | -0.01896 | 0.22636 | 0.996 | -0.5499 | 0.512 |

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was twofold: 1) to determine if students are more likely to graduate if they live in a certain style of on-campus housing during their first year of college; and 2) to identify if the style of on-campus housing a student lives in during their first year of college impacts how many semesters it takes a student to graduate. The results of this study provided evidence that the style of on-campus housing impacts how long it takes a student to graduate. This study examined three styles of on-campus housing: traditional halls, suite style halls and apartments.

Results

Research Question 1

The research provided for the first research question indicates that students were more likely to graduate if they lived in the traditional halls or the suite style halls during their first year than the students who lived in the apartments during their first year of college. Table 1 shows that more participants from the suites and the traditional halls graduated than were expected to graduate. The same table also indicates that fewer participants from the apartments graduated than were expected to graduate. As shown in Table 2, the students who lived in traditional halls and suites were more likely to graduate than students who lived in the apartments during their first year of college.

The literature suggests that living on campus has a positive academic impact on students. Velez (1985) reported that the most significant effect on if a student graduates is where a person lives, with on-campus residents more likely to graduate than off-campus residents. Students who lived on campus were more likely are more likely to stay enrolled and to graduate in four years (Astin, 1977b). In addition, residence halls and on-campus living has a positive impact on graduation rates (Pascarella, et al., 1994). The literature highly suggests that the students who live on campus are more likely to graduate compared to their student peers who did not live on campus.

The literature lacks the distinction between the different styles of on-campus housing. The focus has been the advantages between on-campus housing and off-campus housing, but the literature has not focused on what particular style of on-campus housing helps students to graduate. Research on the distinction between different styles of campus housing could be important as housing styles continue to change.

Today, halls are being built to accommodate the wants of the students and to meet the goals of the institution. They often including an emphasis on shared, common space used for academics, socializing or activities (Godshall, 2000). Some provide the additional amenities that students' want, such as fitness rooms, dining facilities, computer labs, practice rooms or study rooms (Kennedy, 2002). Some schools are remodeling or upgrading existing buildings to have these amenities that appeal to students. The purpose of these facilities is beyond providing a place for sleeping and bathing (Curley, 2003). While halls are being built to accommodate the wants of the students, there is a literature regarding the outcome or benefits for each distinct styles of campus housing.

The results of this study suggests that students who lived in traditional halls and suites were more likely to graduate than students who lived in the apartments during their first year of college.

Research Question 2

The research provided for the second research question indicates that of the students who graduated, they were able to graduate in 12.19 semesters ($SD=2.36$). This means, on average, students were able to graduate in the summer semester following their fourth year of college. The mean suggests that there were students who graduated in less than twelve semesters and students who graduated in longer than twelve semesters.

There was a statistically significant difference between how long it took students in each of the three housing areas to graduate. Students who lived in the traditional halls graduated in 12.4 semesters. Students who lived in the suite style halls graduated in 11.89 semesters and students who lived in the apartments graduated in 11.87 semesters,

A significant difference was found between the number of semesters it took first year students who lived in the traditional halls and the suite style halls to graduate. The students who lived in the suite style halls graduated a semester before the students who lived in the traditional style halls.

Another significant difference was found between the number of semesters it took first year students who lived in the traditional halls and the apartments to graduate. The students who lived in the apartments graduated a semester before the students who lived in the traditional style halls.

No significant difference was found between how many semesters it took first year students who lived in the suites and the apartments to graduate. The average

semesters were the same for the suites and the apartments. This means that students who lived in the apartments and suites during their first year of college were able to graduate in the same amount of time, which was four years. Students who lived in the apartments and the suites graduated a semester before the students who lived in the traditional halls.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses tested in this study were:

1. There is no significant difference in measures between where a student lives on campus during their first year of college and if they will graduate.
2. There is no significant difference in measures among where a student lives on campus during their first year of college and how many semesters it will take students to graduate.

The results of this study found there was a significant difference between where a student lives on campus during their first year of college and if they will graduate. There was a significant difference between the students who graduated and lived in the traditional style halls as first year students and lived in the apartment style halls as first year students. Also, there was a significant difference between the students who graduated and lived in the suite style halls as first year students and the apartment styles halls as first year students. This means that students who lived in the traditional halls and suite style halls as first year students graduated at a significantly higher rate than the students who lived in the apartments as first year students. The results of this study support rejecting the first null hypothesis.

The results of this study found there was a significant difference between where a student lives on campus during their first year of college and how many semesters it will

take them to graduate. There was a significant difference between found between the number of semesters it took first year students who lived in the traditional halls and the suite style halls to graduate. The students who lived in the suite style halls graduated a semester before the students who lived in the traditional style halls. Another significant difference was found between the number of semesters it took first year students who lived in the traditional halls and the apartments to graduate. The students who lived in the apartments graduated a semester before the students who lived in the traditional style halls. The results of this study support rejecting the second null hypothesis.

Neither hypothesis was supported by the results of this study. The study rejects both null hypotheses because statistically significant differences were found. The results of this study can produce new literature involving the impacts of on-campus housing styles on a student's ability to graduate.

Limitations

There are several limitations in this study that should be recognized. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) assumes that variance within each population is equal. The data for this study failed the homogeneity of variance assumption. This means that the ANOVA may not be able to tell if the means are different, because the participants from each of the three styles of housing are not roughly equal. There were 1,874 first year students living in the traditional halls, 1,017 first year students living in the suite style halls and 255 first year students living in the apartments. The participants from the apartments are significantly less than the participants from the traditional halls and the suites. ANOVA works well even when this assumption is violated, but the failed test should be noted.

The large difference in the number of participants from each of the three housing styles is because the traditional halls have the higher number of bed spaces available to students, and the apartments have the lowest number of bed spaces available to students across campus.

Another limitation found during this study is that the Living Learning Communities (LLCs) within this campus are located in only the suite style housing. The literature has suggested that students who live in LLCs were more engaged, had higher return rates, had higher intellectual and social development, and were associated with an overall positive satisfaction with the college experience when compared with peers who did not participate in living learning communities (Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). Students who live in LLCs may have an academic advantage over their peers who did not live in a LLC.

At this institution, only suite style buildings have academic LLCs. These communities have entire floors of buildings or entire buildings that are reserved for students who are in a certain degree major or a certain college at the institution. An example of an LLC is having a business floor, where only business students can live there. The location of the LLCs may increase graduation rates in the suite style halls over the traditional halls and apartments that do not have the academic advantage of the LLCs.

Another limitation to this study is that the participants were from one academic year, the first year students who lived on-campus in the fall of 2004. Multiple years of participants may reveal patterns in graduation rates. This study would be challenging to conduct over multiple years because of changes that have taken place to housing before and after the 2004 academic year. Four suite style halls that house around 750 students

total opened in the fall of 2003. Two buildings, one suite hall and one traditional hall, reopened to residents in 2003 after having been closed for remodeling. One of the high-rise traditional halls that housed over 1,000 students was removed in the summer of 2005. The traditional hall was replaced by several suite style buildings that opened for a little more than 900 residents in the fall of 2006. Due to enrollment shortages, two of the traditional halls that housed almost 250 students each were closed over the summer of 2007. One of those halls reopened for residents in the fall of 2011 because of increased student enrollment. These housing changes would challenge the opportunity to turn this into a long term study.

Implications and Directions for the Future

The study suggests that students are more likely to graduate if they live in the traditional halls and the suite style halls compared to the apartments. Also, of those students who graduate from these areas, those who live in suite style halls and apartments graduate in less semesters of school than those who live in the traditional halls.

The findings of this study have implications for literature and future research. In a time when housing styles are changing based on the wants of the students and the missions of the institutions, these findings that the style of housing a first year student lives in will impact if they graduate and how long it will take them to graduate could be especially important. A purpose for this study was that universities value retention and this study examines a new area of retention and it produced significant results.

There are several groups that can benefit from the results of this study. These results can help first year students choose a living environment that will help them excel. Students will know that they are more likely to graduate if they live in one housing area

over another and they can use that to determine where they want to live. The results can also be beneficial for the housing department. The housing office could use the results to determine if freshman should be limited in where they are allowed to live. The results could help the housing department know which areas of housing need a stronger academic focus. Finally, housing could use the results to determine which style of housing they want to build in the future. Housing may prefer to build suites in the future because it produced the highest graduation rates and the students that graduated in twelve semesters/four years.

Future research in this area can eliminate some of the limitations identified within this study. Research on this topic area can be completed in a region outside of the Midwest or at a different institution, for example not at a large, public, land-grant institution to see if results are consistent or if the results vary. This study could be repeated over multiple years to determine if the results remain consistent or if the results vary.

Directions for the future include continued research on the impacts of on-campus housing styles on graduation rates. Particularly, the research should focus on why students graduate at a higher rate in one style of on-campus housing more than another style of on-campus housing (Astin, 1977b). This research could impact housing for the future, much like the boom in building high-rise traditional halls in the 1950s and 60s (Astin, 1977a; Frederiksen, 1993). This information can help housing departments focus on how to help students succeed academically and reach their desired educational goals, by creating buildings that produce high retention and graduation rates (Curly, 2003; Strange & Banning, 2001).

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VITA

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Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: GRADUATION RATES OF FIRST YEAR STUDENTS IN DIFFERENT ON
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Major Field: Educational Leadership: College Student Development

Biographical:

Education: Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts degree for History from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay in History, Green Bay, WI in May 2008. Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Educational Leadership: College Student Development at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December, 2011.

Experience: Employed as a Residence Director for Housing and Residence Life, Oklahoma State University, 2008-2011; Career Consultant Intern, Oklahoma State University, College of Education Career Services, 2009; Assessment and Training ACUHO-I Intern, Virginia Tech Residential Life Office, Summer of 2010; Residence Hall Director, Missouri State University, Residence Life and Services, 2011-present.

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Title of Study: GRADUATION RATES OF FIRST YEAR STUDENTS IN DIFFERENT ON CAMPUS HOUSING STYLES

Pages in Study: 68

Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science

Major Field: Educational Leadership: College Student Development

Scope and Method of Study: The purpose of this study was to identify differences in graduation rate depending on what type of on-campus housing style first year students live in; Traditional Halls, Suite Style Housing and Apartments. The study starts the first semesters the 3,075 participating first year students lived on campus and ends six years later. First, the data compares whether the student graduated or not, and second, how many semesters were needed for students to graduate.

Findings and Conclusions: This study determined that the type of housing style accounts for some differences in whether a student graduates. Specifically, students who live in the suites style housing and the traditional halls were more likely to graduate than students who lived in the apartments during their first year of school. Additionally, analyses revealed that of the students who did graduate, students who lived in the suite style housing and on-campus apartments graduated in fewer semesters of school than students who lived in the traditional halls

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: John Foubert, Ph.D.
